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Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /011 R

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O: JSNYDER
APPROVED BY: S/S-O: WNEWLIN
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P 042014Z SEP 73
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSSAG PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 175434

EXDIS

FOLTEL FM BANGKOK 04 SEP 73 SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC REPEATED
TO YOU

QTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 13782

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, TH
SUBJECT: TALKS ON US FORCE LEVELS

DEPT PASS SECDEF, CINCPAC, USSAG

1. FOLLOWING REPEATED RTG REQUESTS, WE AGREED TO HOLD MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 4 OF US-THAI GROUP DISCUSSING US FORCE REDUCTIONS. REFUSAL ON OUR PART WOULD HAVE BEEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, AND THAI WENT INTO MEETING ON CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT A) US SIDE WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS FURTHER WITHDRAWALS AT THIS TIME, B) DISCUSSIONS WOULD BE LIMITED TO STATUS REPORTS ON THE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED FORCE REDUCTIONS AND THEIR ECONOMIC IMPACT, C) THERE WOULD BE NO PRESS STATEMENT BUT RESULTS WOULD BE PROVIDED TO PRIME
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MINISTER FOR POSSIBLE USE IN HIS WEEKLY WEDNESDAY PRESS CONFERENCE, AND D) NEXT TALKS WOULD NOT BE HELD FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

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2. US TEAM LED BY COMUSMACTHAI, GENERAL MELLEN, MET WITH GENERAL KRIANGSAK AND THAI TEAM AT FOREIGN OFFICE ON SEPT 4 FOR WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE THREE-HOUR SESSION OF FRIENDLY BUT TOUGH NEGOTIATIONS, WITH THAI RAISING QUESTIONS REGARDING FURTHER AIRCRAFT WITHDRAWALS, BRIEFING BY US ON US STRATEGIC PLANNING, ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND POSSIBILITIES OF TURN-OVER OF ALL EXCESS PROPERTY TO RTG FOR DISPOSAL.

3. AFTER INITIAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS THANKING US FOR COOPERATION IN EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF TAC AIR UNITS DURING AUGUST, GENERAL KRIANGSAK RAISED QUESTION OF B-52'S. ASSERTING THAT MATTER WAS "OF INTEREST TO HIGH LEVELS" OF RTG, KRIANGSAK SAID HE WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO REQUEST THAT ALL B-52'S AUTHORIZED FOR TDY UNDER 1972 AUGMENTATION AND ALL KC-135'S IN SAME CATEGORY BE WITHDRAWN. WE POINTED OUT CONCESSION TO THAI INTERESTS IN DECISION TO WITHDRAW 10 KC-135'S WITH TAC AIR SQUADRONS ON FIRST TRANCHE AND AGREED ONLY TO REPORT RTG REQUEST TO USG.

4. GENERAL KRIANGSAK THEN SUGGESTED THAT US STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS WHICH FORMED BASIS FOR US DECISIONS ON FORCE STRUCTURE IN THAILAND SHOULD BE BRIEFED TO A "SMALLER GROUP." WE AGREED TO SEEK AUTHORITY FOR SUCH A BRIEFING IN HOPE THAT FACTUAL PRESENTATION OF US REQUIREMENTS FOR SORTIE LEVELS AND REACTION TIMES TO COUNTER POSSIBLE COMMUNIST INITIATIVES IN INDOCHINA WOULD PROVIDE RTG MILITARY LEADERS AMMUNITION TO WITHSTAND PRESSURES FOR DRASTIC CUTS IN US FORCES.

5. SPEAKING "ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE RTG" GENERAL KRIANGSAK RAISED QUESTION OF ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR THAILAND. HE STATED THAT THAI FEEL THEY HAVE GIVEN US THEIR SINCERE COOPERATION AND HAVE NEVER TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THEIR FRIENDS. NOW RTG FEELS NEED FOR ADDITIONAL AIR POWER AND FIRE POWER TO REPLACE SECURITY PROVIDED BY US FORCES. ALTHOUGH HE STATED RTG WAS NOT MAKING ANY SPECIFIC REQUEST NOW, HE SUGGESTED THAT THAI ARMY REQUIRED LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY TO PROTECT THE BORDERS, THE NAVY NEEDED MORE PBR'S TO PATROL THE MEKONG RIVER AND PREVENT INFILTRATION AND THE AIR FORCE MORE AIRCRAFT. KRIANGSAK REQUESTED USG CONSIDER STEPS

TO MAKE THAILAND STRONG ENOUGH TO STAND BY ITSELF AND CONTINUE FIGHTING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THREATS WITHOUT HAVING TO CALL FOR OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE.

6. DURING DETAILED DISCUSSION OF MILITARY AID, KRIANGSAK PROPOSED THAT US SUSPEND ALL PROPERTY DISPOSAL ACTIONS IN THAILAND AND TURN OVER ALL EXCESS ITEMS TO THE SUPREME COMMAND FOR USE IN CIVIC ACTION PROGRAMS OR OTHER DISPOSITION BY THE RTG. WE ACKNOWLEDGED THE REQUEST BUT NOTED THAT HIS RAISED VERY COMPLICATED PROBLEMS.

7. ON SUBJECT OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF FORCE REDUCTIONS, WE DESCRIBED STEPS BEING TAKEN BY US TO EAST PROBLEM OF THAI EMPLOYEES. IN

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RESPONSE TO EARLIER REQUEST KRIANGSAK WAS PROVIDED LIST OF THAI EMPLOYEES AND THEIR SKILLS LOSING JOBS AT NAM PHONG. STATUS AND FUTURE OF THAI SECURITY GUARDS AT NAM PHONG WERE ALSO ADDRESSED.

8. THAI THEN FLOATED A PROPOSED JOINT PRESS STATEMENT DESIGNED TO ANNOUNCE FULL RANGE OF MATTERS RAISED BY THAI INCLUDING CLEAR IMPLICATION US WAS READY TO WITHDRAW B-52'S. AFTER LENGTHY NEGOTIATION, IN WHICH WE STRESSED PROBLEM WE WOULD CREATE BY LEADING PRESS TO EXPECT A JOINT STATEMENT AFTER EVERY MEETING, THAI AGREED THERE WOULD BE NO JOINT STATEMENT.PRIME MINISTER THANOM WOULD BE GIVEN DATA WE PROVIDED AT TODAY'S MEETING SO AS TO BE IN A POSITION TO BRIEF PRESS AT WEEKLY WEDNESDAY PRESS CONFERENCE ON PROGRESS UNDER ALREADY AGREED REDUCTIONS.

9. NO DATE WAS SET FOR FUTURE MEETING.
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